



'Breaking the Circle'

Towards a Fife-wide rail enhancement strategy

A report by:

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Newburgh Train Station Campaign

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Breaking the Circle

Our vision for the railway in Scotland is that it should provide a safe, reliable customer focused service that supports our economy and delivers wider social inclusion and environmental aspirations

Scottish National Transport Strategy

The first 15 years of the century have seen the delivery of a number of major rail re-opening schemes in Scotland, well in excess of elsewhere, including highly successful schemes such as the Stirling to Alloa extension and the Borders railway. In addition, electrification projects across the central belt have either been completed or are well underway, with work now begun on a major upgrade to the Aberdeen – Inverness route.



With the completion of the Aberdeen – Inverness, Highland Main Line upgrades, EGIP and the other electrification by mid-2019 there are no more major rail upgrades in prospect and given the lead time for development it is unlikely that any will start before the early 2020s. We believe there is a compelling case for the focus to now shift to a programme of major rail enhancements in Fife.

Over the past 50 years Fife has suffered from a significant route closure programme in the wake of the opening of the Forth and Tay road bridges, with six routes closing in the years leading up to 1970. Through progressive action from Fife Regional / Fife Council it has subsequently and gradually managed to develop its surviving local network to better serve its needs in the modern post-industrial, city-based Scotland. However, in comparison with other areas of Scotland the network has not significantly altered from the, post closure, 1970 network. The current ScotRail and Transport Scotland plans do not indicate that this is likely to change in the medium term.

There is a risk that the very substantial investment that has been made in the new Queensferry crossing will make road more attractive compared with rail, leading to modal shift away from rail to road and a risk that history will repeat itself. This should not happen. This does not need to happen.

This assessment suggests that Fife is long overdue new investment in rail capability and that this is necessary to avoid a worsening of rail modal share with its implication for emissions, congestion and inclusivity at a time when there has been significant increases in rail travel elsewhere in Scotland. The proposal puts the case to increase Fife's share for better and fairer rail connectivity.

A package of rail enhancement for Fife

There are currently four locally promoted rail re-opening projects across Fife which have individually demonstrated strong economic and social benefits for local communities and gained cross-party support from elected representatives.

Alloa – Dunfermline passenger service



Reopening the freight route previously servicing Longannet Power Station and building on the successful investment in the Stirling – Alloa – Kincardine line in 2008. This project could provide rail access to a number of communities on the West Fife coast and re-establish a public transport link between Dunfermline and Stirling. Work will be required to upgrade the line for passenger trains and higher speed services.

Levenmouth branch re-opening

A strong community campaign has been fighting for the re-establishment of the five-mile branch line from Thornton to Leven for over 25 years. An existing line along the route has been mothballed by Network Rail, but with capital investment could connect the largest urban community in Scotland without a rail link to the national network. Significant freight potential also exists with Diageo's Cameron Bridge distillery and bottling plant located along the line.



Newburgh station re-opening



The Ladybank to Perth railway line runs through the heart of the village of Newburgh but since 1955 there has been no station, leaving the rural community isolated from public transport networks. A new station would open up significantly longer distance commuting, business and leisure opportunities for a number of villages in North Fife. Capital costs for a new station would be relatively small, and the 2018 national timetable review provides the perfect opportunity to factor in a new Newburgh station for the route.

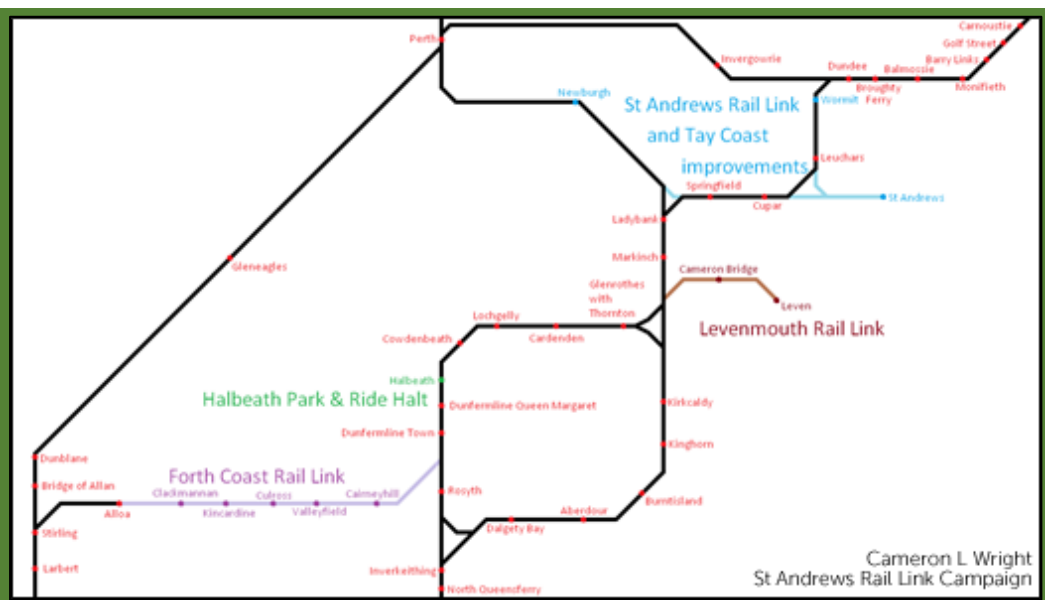
St Andrews to Edinburgh and Dundee

Despite being one of Scotland and the UK's major tourism destinations, a host of international sporting events and home to the country's oldest university, St Andrews nearest railway station is 6 miles away at Leuchars. Congestion on the town's narrow streets and severe shortage of parking cause pollution and damage to the ancient town. A branch line to Leuchars was closed in 1969 and work will need to be done to secure the land and capital for a new line, but the strong and significant economic case, which has backing from the University, justifies further development of the project.



In addition, there is a long-standing Fife Council proposal for a rail station at Halbeath Park and Ride, which we have included in this assessment. The site already has 1,000 parking spaces and a bus station, and the halt was included in the 2009 Strategic Transport Project Review, but work has not progressed on this.

We propose that these enhancement projects are adopted by Fife Council and SEStran as a package of rail enhancements which will connect Fife to the cities, delivering significant transport improvements and economic benefits across Fife in the coming years.



There has been significant investment in recent years in the Borders and Lothians parts of the SEStran area. Consequently, it is not an unreasonable time for SEStran to focus its strategy on Fife. The next ScotRail franchise is due to be re-let in 2025 and now is the time to start building up objectives and outcomes for this next phase.

Four of the five projects utilise or build on existing rail assets, either reopening dormant lines and extending the rail network to significant centres of population, or providing additional local stations along existing lines.

All projects will have implications for timetabling in the region, as well as rolling stock in the case of the reopened and new lines. However, early commitment from Fife Council and SEStran should ensure these requirements are taken into account ahead of the new national timetable to be introduced in December 2018, and ensure that sufficient capacity on the network is maintained to accommodate the enhancements.

Service development in Fife has, up until now, been incremental, building bit by bit upon existing infrastructure and services and making relatively small changes. However, there is the potential in Fife to look at all the services currently provided and all the aspirations and consider the potential to review and improve a large number of journey opportunities through this joint package of enhancements.



Project Summaries

The table below summarises the position of each project on four key factors. Control Period 6 (CP6) runs from 2019 – 2024. Control Period 7 (CP7) runs from 2024 onwards.

| Project | Costs | Studies | Approvals | Timescale |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|-------------------------------------|---|
| Alloa to Dunfermline line | Significant; upgrading existing freight line & providing stations | Updated STAG & GRIP 1 – 3 needed | Simple – planning permission needed | Could be introduced in CP6 as line is already in place |
| Halbeath Park and Ride station | Relatively small; line, parking & road infrastructure in place | STAG & GRIP 1 – 3 needed | Simple – planning permission needed | Could be early CP6 introduction (2019/20); needs to fit with Dec '18 timetable needs |
| Levenmouth line | Significant; rebuild existing railway & provide stations | STAG complete; GRIP 1 – 3 needed | Simple – planning permission needed | Potential to be main CP6 line reopening |
| Newburgh Station | Relatively small | STAG and GRIP 1 – 3 needed | Simple – planning permission needed | Could be early CP6 introduction (2019/20); needs to fit in with Dec '18 timetable needs |
| St Andrews line | Significant; new railway of 7.8km / 4 miles 70 chains, and new station | STAG required; feasibility studies need enhancing | TAWS order required | End of CP 6, or main reopening for CP7 |

Definitions

STAG – Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance. This guidance provides a framework to assess evidence based transport problems and opportunities. A STAG report will also incorporate a business case which provides the documentation with the reasoning and justification of the scheme.

GRIP – Governance for Railway Investment Projects. This is the process used by Network Rail to manage developments to enhance or renew Britain's rail network. It is broken down into eight stages with stage 1 to 3 covering Output Definition, Feasibility and Option Selection.

TAWS order – Orders under the Transport and Works (Scotland) Act 2007 that authorise transport projects and can grant wide ranging powers such as compulsory purchase of land or the closure of streets. TAWS orders are granted by Scottish Ministers.

Next Steps – Towards a Fife Rail Strategy

1. Support from Fife Council and SEStran

Following on from the Hansford Review of July 2017, Network Rail have promised to support third parties who wish to take forward enhancement projects on the network. Fife Council and SEStran combined have the remit and expertise to move this forward. We ask them to adopt this package of rail enhancements as a strategic improvement across the region's rail network, and commit to maintaining sufficient capacity across the network to accommodate these enhancements.

2. Identify funding to complete STAG and feasibility studies

In the Scottish Parliament on the 27th September 2017, in reference to the **Levenmouth** link, the Minister for Transport Humza Yousaf said he is 'minded to instruct my officials at Transport Scotland to take on the responsibility for the [Grip 4] study'. The minister must keep this promise and include full funding for completion of the study.

The Tay Cities Deal, which was submitted to the Scottish and UK governments in Feb 17, contains provisions for the **Newburgh** and **St Andrews** studies. Final Heads of Agreement on this are due to be signed in early 2018, and we would expect Fife Council to ensure this funding provision is maintained in the final version they agree to.

The Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Deal disappointingly did not provide any explicit provisions for rail in South and Central Fife, however, promises to unlock strategic housing sites in Dunfermline could arguably include funding for the **Halbeath** station and **Dunfermline to Alloa** reports. SEStran can also play a key role in funding the study for the strategic cross-region passenger and freight link.

3. Ensure funding is available for new rail enhancements in the Rail Enhancements and Capital Investment Strategy

In 2019 funding for enhancement projects will shift from delivery within the 5 year control periods to a pipeline process, with enhancements being delivered when business cases are fully developed for each project.¹ This will be underpinned by the Scottish Government's Rail Enhancement and Capital Investment Strategy, which is due to be published by the end of 2017. It is vital that this strategy includes aspirations for new rail enhancements, as well as enhancements on the existing network such as electrification and platform extensions. In the meantime, we will continue to support the Scottish Government's calls for restoration of a fair funding settlement for rail between the UK and Scottish Governments.²

¹ The Scottish Minister's high level output specification for control period 6, section 3 - <https://www.transport.gov.scot/media/39496/high-level-output-specification-hlos-for-control-period-6-final.pdf>

² Minister calls for Holyrood to unite on rail deal <https://beta.gov.scot/news/minister-calls-for-holyrood-to-unite-on-rail-deal/>

4. Gain commitment from the Scottish Government for joint capital funding for the projects

Inclusion of funding commitments in a future Scottish Government budget, combined with capital commitments from Fife Council, could ensure funding is secured for the full package of rail enhancements by the end of CP6.

This report was compiled following meetings in May and September 2017 between;

- Levenmouth Rail Campaign - <http://www.lmrc-action.org.uk>
- Newburgh Train Station Campaign - <http://newburghtrainstation.org.uk>
- StARlink – The St Andrews Rail Campaign - <http://www.starlink-campaign.org.uk>
- Alloa Community Council - <http://alloa-community-council.btck.co.uk>
- David Prescott of Allan Rail Solutions – <http://www.allanrail.co.uk>
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